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AUTHOR	Ensminger, David C.; Surry, Daniel W.; Miller, Michelle A.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the results of a study into the conditions that facilitate the implementation of innovations. The following eight conditions that facilitate the implementation of technological and program innovations have been identified: (1) dissatisfaction with the status quo; (2) skills and knowledge; (3) adequate resources; (4) rewards or incentives; (5) adequate time; (6) participation; (7) commitment; and (8) leadership. This study emphasized the need for instrumentalist perspectives when implementing instructional technology into institutions of higher education. An online survey was employed to assess faculty perceptions of the relative importance of the eight conditions when implementing an online degree program. Scenario-based questions were used in order to operationalize the eight conditions. The purpose of the study was to determine which of the eight conditions faculty in higher education perceived as the most influential when implementing an online degree program. Results of the study can assist universities in implementing online degree programs. (Contains 23 references.) (MES)

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Running head: IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Implementation of Online Education Programs:

Faculty Perceptions of the Conditions that Facilitate Implementation.

David C. Ensminger

Daniel W. Surry

Michelle A Miller

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Abstract

This paper describes the results of a study into the conditions that facilitate the implementation of innovations. Ely (1990, 1999a), identifies eight conditions that facilitate the implementation of technological and program innovations. Ely's eight conditions are Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo, Skills and Knowledge, Adequate Resources, Rewards or Incentives, Adequate Time, Participation, Commitment, and Leadership. This study emphasized the need for instrumentalist perspectives when implementing instructional technology into institutions of higher education. We employed an online survey to assess faculty perceptions of the relative importance of the eight conditions when implementing an online degree program. We used scenario based questions in order to operationalize the eight conditions. The purpose of this study was to determine which of the eight conditions faculty in higher education perceived as the most influential when implementing an online degree program. Results of the study can assist universities in implementing online degree programs.

Implementation of Online Education Programs:

Faculty Perceptions of the Conditions that Facilitate Implementation.

The personal computer and its peripheral equipment (i.e. scanners, projectors, digital cameras, etc) provide instructors with the tools for developing multimedia instruction. The Internet in conjunction with personal computers has moved instruction not only out of the classroom but also, off campus. Although colleges and universities have made instructional technology tools available, many faculty members have not implemented these technologies either in the classroom or for the purpose of distance education (Surry & Land, 2000; Lee & Johnson 1998). Armstrong (1996) and Sammons (1994) report that approximately 3% of faculty in colleges and universities use technology in instruction. Most instructors appear to prefer the traditional instruction (i.e. face-to-face lecture based instruction) used when they were students.

Faculty resistance to instructional technology in the classroom

During the 1970's, the first wave of instructional technology tools began to appear on university campuses. However, administrators failed to develop plans for implementing these technologies and often provided little support for individuals who tried to integrate technology into their classrooms. In addition to poor administrative support, the faculty themselves resisted the implementation of technology in the classroom (Lee & Johnson, 1998). A 1970's study by Kozma (as cited in Lee and Johnson 1998) researched reasons why faculty members were reluctant to integrate technology into their instruction. Kozma's study identified reasons that influenced faculty decisions not to use technology as well as environmental/organizational variables that presented obstacles to implementation. Factors that affected faculty decisions included the depersonalization of instruction, poor quality of programs and equipment, lack of training and time, no incentives or rewards, and confusion over the role of technology in job

responsibilities. Organizational obstacles included lack of coordination between faculty and technical experts, equipment availability and access, poorly defined guidelines or expectations.

Recent studies indicate that faculty still resist implementing instructional technology in the classroom. The reasons for this failure range from training and skills to lack of incentives. Faculty continue to lack the necessary skills to use technological tools as well necessary knowledge to develop multimedia instruction. Faculty feel they do not have adequate time to develop technology-based instruction. Concerns still exist over the availability and quality of equipment. Faculty continue to prefer traditional lecture based instructional methods. Administrators have not clearly defined the role that instructional technology plays in faculty job responsibilities. Universities have not provided technological and pedagogical training so faculty can develop multimedia instruction. Incentives and rewards are inadequate and do not motivate faculty to implement or develop multimedia instruction (Beggs, 2000; Cummings, 1996; Cumming1995, Sammons, 1994).

Although technologies have improved, universities still have not been widely successful in implementing instructional technology in the classroom in part because instructors still do not posses the skills and knowledge to successfully integrate technology into their classroom. This lack of skills can cause some faculty to feel uncomfortable with technology, which leads to feelings of insecurity and lowered self-efficacy. This problem can only be resolved through training and technical support so instructors can develop the skills and confidence. However, many universities do not provide enough training or support to meet the needs of their faculty. Universities that do provide support to faculty still face the issue that faculty want to maintain the status quo in regards to traditional instructional methods (i.e. lecture-based instruction.). Additionally, promotion and tenure policies do not provide enough incentive or rewards to

motivate faculty to develop multimedia instructional methods. Policies that mandate the use of technology in the classroom produce feelings of resentment. Lan (2001) indicated that 30% of faculty perceived mandatory use policies as a negative incentive to implementing technology. Furthermore, issues such as the time needed to develop courses and the availability and quality of equipment still influence faculty decisions to implement technology in the classroom.

Faculty Resistance to Online Instruction

The use of Internet as a "classroom" has begun to transform the view of education not only nationally but internationally as well (Bridges, 2000). Milheim (2001) describe the advantages for faculty that teach courses via the web. Some of these advantages include teaching to students beyond the campus, flexibility in their schedule, use of atypical teaching methods, and working with more mature and motivated students. Milheim also noted several advantages for students enrolled in web-based courses. Student advantages include flexible course schedule, stay at home learning, and open access to course information (Milheim, 2001). In addition, university administrators see advantages to web based instruction. For administration, web-based instruction may increase enrollment, reduce the need to build more class space, meet the time restraint needs of non-traditional students, and meet the technological expectations younger students (Gilbert 1996, Gilbert 1995).

Universities have perceived these advantages and have moved toward implementing e-learning programs. In spite of the other advantages that exist, many universities continue to struggle with the implementation of web-based instruction. In many instances, universities have not adequately prepared their staff and faculty to meet this change. Faculty and staff report feeling pressured to conform to this movement (Gilbert, 1996; Gilbert 1995).

Some of the factors that inhibit the implementation of technology in the classroom also affect the implementation of web-based instruction. These include faculty reluctance to employ instructional methods other than face-to-face lectures. Faculty lack both the pedagogical and technological expertise to implement web-based courses, and web-based instruction. Converting classroom materials into materials for web-based instruction takes time. Instructors perceive no financial or career benefits from participating in web-based instruction. (Folkstad & Haug, 2002; Lan 2001; Milheim, 2001; Saba & Young, 2001).

In addition to these issues, several other concerns have arisen that influence faculty decisions to develop and teach web-based courses. Faculty are concerned with the level of commitment from the university in the area of web-based instruction. (Lee, 2001). Concerns over intellectual property, academic freedom, job security, and existing infrastructure within the university have also influenced faculty as they evaluate web-based instruction, (Folkstad & Haug, 2002; Saba & Young, 2001).

Faculty must perceive the administration (particularly powerbrokers) as being committed to web-based instruction. This includes not only the expenditure of finances to purchase equipment, but also the development of a strong infrastructure that supports those who develop and engage in web-based instruction. This means that the university's policies and procedures must provide rewards for those who choose to use the web as a classroom. Additionally, these polices must address the faculty concerns over intellectual property. If a faculty member develops a course for web-based instruction they must feel safe in knowing that the information and course belongs to them and they can choose to use the materials in other settings, even for financial gain.

Instrumentalist Perspective.

In order to understand the implementation process, we need to consider two opposing philosophies that try to explain the implementation of technology. These are the determinist perspective and the instrumentalist perspective. The determinist's philosophy purports that advancements in technology directly lead to implementation and use by individuals in society (Surry & Land, 2000). The relatively slow implementation of instructional technologies by faculty on university campuses does not support this perspective. To understand why full-scale implementation has not occurred, we must take an instrumentalist perspective.

The instrumentalist philosophy considers the human factor in the implementation and use of technology. This view purports that to understand implementation, we must focus on the individual user of the technology and the environmental variables (i.e. organizational, administrative, cultural) that affect use of new technologies (Surry & Land, 2000; Surry & Farquhar, 1997). This study applies an instrumentalist perspective to understanding the factors that influence the implementation of online learning programs by colleges and universities. Because faculty play a key role in implementing instructional technologies, we must pay particular attention to their perspectives of the factors that influence implementation. By gaining insight into faculty perceptions, organizations can develop plans for implementing technology that address the concerns and needs of faculty members, thereby having a greater affect on implementation.

Conditions that Facilitate the Implementation of Technology.

Ely (1999, 1990a) identified eight conditions that facilitate the implementation of innovations or new technologies. These conditions traverse organizational and cultural boundaries as well as apply to the implementation of technological and non-technological innovations. Ely's conditions address specific issues related to both human and environmental variables that can facilitate the implementation of an instructional technologies. Ely's conditions are summarized below:

1) Dissatisfaction with the status quo: an emotional discomfort resulting from the use of current methods that are perceived as inefficient or ineffective (Ely, 1999,1990a).
2) Knowledge and Skills: do users possess the needed skills and knowledge to implement the innovation. Ely reports that this condition consistently ranks as one of the most influential condition among the eight (Ely, 1999,1990a).
3) Adequate Resources: availability and access to resources needed to implement the innovation. Resources include finances, hardware, software and personnel (Ely, 1999,1990a).
4) Adequate Time: powerbroker's willingness to provide adequate and compensated time for users to increase personal skills and knowledge as it relates to the innovation. This condition also refers to the users' willingness to devote time to learn new skills for implementation (Ely, 1999,1990a).
5) Rewards or Incentives: the existence of incentives that motivate users to employ the innovation, or rewards provided by the organization for those who do use the innovation (Ely, 1999,1990a).

6) Participation: active involvement of key stakeholders in decision that involve planning and design of the innovation. The condition refers to all stakeholders but emphasizes the participation users (Ely, 1999,1990a).
7) Commitment: users perceive the powerbrokers of the organization (i.e. Presidents, CEO, and Vice Presidents) actively supporting the implementation of the innovation (Ely, 1999,1990a).
8) Leadership: the assistance of immediate supervisors that helps users overcome obstacles to implementation (Ely, 1999,1990a). This includes providing support and encouragement to users, as well as role-modeling use of the innovation.

If present, a condition can work to support and foster the realization of other conditions. However, if absent, a condition can prevent other conditions from materializing or reduce their effectiveness (Ely 1990b, Ensminger 2001). Ely does not provide an actual strategy for implementation, but notes that research indicates that the more of these conditions that exist, the increased chance of successful implementation, (Ely 1999, 1990a). Others have suggested a more proactive use that involves assessing within the organization the level of each condition as it relates to the particular innovation, (Ensminger, 2001, Ensminger & Surry 2002, Surry & Ensminger, 2002).

Faculty members represent an import group of stakeholders and can positively or negatively influence the implementation of web-based instruction at the university and departmental level. Knowing how faculty members perceive the importance of these eight conditions can assist an institution in successfully implementing a web-based instructional program. This study assessed faculty perceptions of these conditions and, in particular, the importance of these conditions as they relate implementing an online degree program.

Additionally, this study looked at the importance that faculty members placed on each condition in the implementation of innovations.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were recruited from the membership of an instructional technology electronic mailing list. Of those who responded (n=56), approximately 65 % worked in higher education settings n=36. Of the participants employed at colleges or universities, 28 served at 4-year institutions while eight served at 2-year institutions. The education level of the sample varied with most participants possessing a master's level degree. The sample includes two bachelor's level, 23 master's level, nine doctoral level, one other, and one not responding. Twenty-eight identified themselves as either faculty or staff, one as upper management, two as middle management, and three as lower management. Thirty-four (94%) agreed that they had played a facilitating role in implementing a new program or technology at their institution.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used scenario-based questions related to the implementation of a fictitious new online degree program at a university. One scenario question was presented for each of the eight conditions identified by Ely. *(e.g. Incentives- Implementing a new online degree program when faculty's teaching load is reduced so they can develop online courses.)* In order to reduce pattern based responding; half of the scenario questions were presented with the condition being absent and half were presented with the condition being present. Participants rated the likely success of implementation on a five-point scale. The scale ranged from (1) very easy to implement to (5) very difficult to implement. Participants were also asked to indicate which of the eight conditions they thought were important in facilitating the implementation of a new program or technology innovation. Finally, participants were asked to provide demographic information.

Prior to the study, the questionnaire was reviewed by our colleagues who provided feedback about the design and structure of the questionnaires and about the wording of the questions. After the questionnaires were reviewed and revised, they were posted as forms on the World Wide Web (WWW). The study was approved by the human subjects review board at the host university. A WWW home page was set up for the study which explained the purpose of the study, provided informed consent information for the participants, and provided a link to the questionnaire. The main page and the questionnaires were housed on a local server.

Results

Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics to compare perceptions between those working in two year and four year educational institutions. No significant difference was found between perceptions of faculty employed by four year and those employed by two-year institution for any of the eight conditions. Descriptive statistics indicate faculty perceive three conditions as more important than the other five. These more important conditions are Resources, Skills/Knowledge, and Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo. (See table 1).

Since the purpose of this study was to evaluate faculties' perceptions of the eight conditions that facilitate implementation, we looked at the percentages of those who indicated that a condition would help facilitate the implementation the program. Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that the implementation of an innovation would be "very easy" or "easy" if the condition were present. This table also provides the cumulative percentages of easy and very easy to implement responses.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics for Scenario Questions Presented by Mean Value.

Condition	Mean	SD	Range
Resources	1.19	.58	1-4
Skills & Knowledge	1.25	.50	1-3
Status Quo	1.36	.49	1-3
Commitment	2.17	.77	1-4
Rewards	2.25	.81	1-4
Participation	2.31	.86	1-4
Leadership	2.39	.80	1-4
Time	2.56	.91	1-5

Cumulative percentages indicate the faculty view all eight conditions as important when implementing an online program. However, Resources, Skills/Knowledge, and Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo have the highest cumulative percentages with Dissatisfaction having the greatest value. Along with these variables, faculty perceived the commitment of presidents and vice presidents as important to the success of implementing online programs.

Table 2.

Percentages for those responding very easy or easy to implement and cumulative vales.

Condition	Percent Responding Very Easy	Percent Responding Easy	Cumulative Percentage
Resources*	86.1	11.1	97.2
Skill & Knowledge*	77.8	19.4	97.2
Status Quo*	63.9	36.1	100
Commitment*	16.7	55.6	72.2
Rewards	13.9	55.6	69.4
Participation	11.1	61.1	72.2
Leadership	8.3	55.6	63.9
Time	2.8	61.1	63.9

* Indicates questions that were reversed scored.

Faculty were also asked to indicate their perception of the relative importance of each condition when implementing a new program or technology. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents considered Adequate Resources (i.e. equipment, personnel, and finances) to be important to the implementation process. This is consistent with results previously reported in this paper. Participation and Rewards/Incentives were also considered valuable with 72.2 percent listing these conditions as being important to the implementation process. See table 3.

Table 3.

Percentage of Faculty Who Perceive a Condition as Important to the Implementation Process.

Condition	Percent Perceiving it as Important.
Resources	88.9
Participation	72.2
Rewards and Incentives	72.2
Skills and Knowledge	66.7
Commitment	61.1
Time	58.3
Leadership	39.9
Status Quo	36.1

As with the scenario questions, Adequate Skills and Knowledge was also perceived as an important variable with 66.7 percent of respondents indicating that it is valuable to the implementation process. However, Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo was considered of little value to the implementation process, although all respondents indicated that it would influence the implementation in the scenario questions. This is an interesting and counter intuitive result that requires additional research.

Discussion

The results of this study substantiate Ely's theory that eight conditions are important to the implementation process. Additionally, the results support the findings from pervious research on the factors that influence the use of educational technology both in the classroom and for distance education purposes. Previous findings indicate that resources, skills and knowledge, participation, commitment from powerbrokers, and the preference to use traditional instructional methods, (i.e. satisfaction with current methods) are all important conditions that have affected the use of technology for instructional purposes. Results from this study indicate that faculty do perceive these variables as important and must feel that attempts are being made to meet these conditions in order for instructional technology or online instruction to be successful.

One finding that seems to contradict itself is the results of the Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo. One hundred percent of the participants in this study indicated that if faculty were dissatisfied with current teaching methods that the implementation of online program would be easily or very easily implemented. However, only 36 percent regard this condition as important to the implementation process in general. This difference may stem from the fact the scenario based question for status quo was written with the condition being absent (i.e. *Implementing a new online degree program when faculty prefer the current in class program*). The reverse scoring of this question changed the original answers from difficult and very difficult. This means that one hundred percent of the participants considered it difficult or very difficult to implement an online when faculty are satisfied with current instructional methods. This finding supports results from previous studies. Additionally, the condition Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo is an emotional feeling about effectiveness and efficiency of an existing program. The scenario question asked participants to rate implementation on an online program, while the

other question just asked for it level of importance to the implementation process. It appears that this condition provides an indirect measure of motivation to change in relation to a specific innovation.

Furthermore, faculty perceive rewards and incentives as important when implementing a new program or technologies. Again, this supports the previous research that indicates that faculty want pay increases, or career incentives in order to implement new programs. Universities must be willing to change policies and provide incentives in order to increase their chances of successfully implementing new programs such as online education.

Along with rewards and incentives, faculty perceive participation, (i.e. their involvement in decision making and development process) as an important aspect of the implementation process. This may require universities to increase the involvement of the faculty or at least involve those faculty that are well respected by other faculty when adopting and implementing new programs an technologies.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that faculty think that universities must provide the needed resources to support online degree programs. Additionally, those implementing the program (i.e. the faculty) must possess the needed design, development, and instructional skills in order for the program to be successful. Results also indicate that faculty consider participation in designing, developing, and decision making important when implementing an innovation. This information supports the notion that universities need to view faculty as important stakeholders when developing innovations that will directly affect faculty members, (i.e. online degree programs). At institutions where faculty are satisfied with the current methods of instruction personal interest in teaching online course or using technology in instruction may motivate some

faculty to develop online courses. For those not personally motivated, institutions may have to provide incentives or rewards in order to implement online programs. The results of this study support this idea. Additionally, faculty consider the level of commitment from institutional leaders, (i.e. Presidents, Vice Presidents) as an important when implementing innovations. This requires that university leaders to become actively involved in the implementation processes in order to show visible support for the changes.

This research provides universities with a better understanding of how one important set of stakeholders (faculty) view the importance of the eight conditions that facilitate implementation. Universities will find it helpful to gain information of their own faculty's perceptions related to these conditions prior to implementation of new programs, particularly online educational programs. By knowing this information, a successful implementation plan can be developed.

Although, Ely's conditions address the factors that help facilitate the implementation of an innovation, these conditions do not provide us with a model. Universities must still face the problem of how to successfully implement online learning programs. Surry (2002) presents a model that can assist universities. The RIPPLES model directly and indirectly address all eight conditions that facilitate implementation as well as utilizes an instrumentalist perspective to implementation of educational technology. The RIPPLES model addresses the resources, infrastructure, people, policies, learning, evaluation and support when implementing instructional technology programs. Universities just starting to implement an online learning program can use the RIPPLES model as a foundation for developing an implementation plan.

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